

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *England* *Scotland* and *America*.

To be publish'd Weekly.

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WE might no doubt produce more *Instances* of the **REVIVAL** of *Religion* in some other *Parts* of **NEW ENGLAND** in this long Season of general and growing *Decay*; had we Time to look over a great Number of *Manuscript original Letters* now in the Hands of the Rev. Mr. *Prince*; which were written from *Ministers* and others in almost all *Parts* of the *Latid* during the Course of those *sixty Years*, which pass'd from 1660 to 1720. The Substance of many of which Letters, i. e. those of a *religious* and *historical* Nature, may be hereafter in proper Seasons published. And if this *Paper* continues, and the **ALMIGHTY** will graciously please to help us; we hope to make it a *Magazine* or *Treasury* of the *most pious* *Parts* of our *new English History* from the Beginning:

But the *Instances* above may suffice at present to illustrate our **Ist** general Head, of *some transient Revivals of Religion* in some *particular Places* of **NEW ENGLAND** in the Midst of *those Decays*. We now go on to our

II General Head, which is to give an *Account* of the *more surprizing and more extensive REVIVALS* of it, in the *present Day*.

And this we shall divide into these *two Parts*, (1) *The remarkable Revival* in this Country before Mr. *Whitefield's* Arrival hither. (2) *The further Progress* of this Revival since.

I. *The remarkable Revival* in this Country before Mr. *Whitefield's* Arrival hither in *Sept. 1740.*

In the Night after the Lord's Day, *October 29. 1727.* there was a general and *amazing EARTHQUAKE* throughout *New England & the neighbouring Provinces*; which with several repeated Shocks afterwards in divers Parts of the *Land*, was a Means of *awakening many to serious Thoughts of God and Eternity*, and of reviving Religion among us; which we shall give in the Words of the Rev. Dr. *Sewall*, and Mr. *Prince*, *Webb* and *Cooper of Boston*, in their Preface to the 3d Edition of Mr. *Edward's Narrative*. Mentioning some remarkable *Effusions of the SPIRIT of CHRIST in other Ages and Parts of the World*; they go on as follows,

‘ Nor have we in these remote *Corners of the Earth*, where
‘ *Satan* had his *Seat* from Time immemorial, been left without
‘ out a *Witness* of the *divine Power and Grace*.

‘ Yea, we need look no higher than *our own Times*, to find
‘ abundant Occasion to celebrate the *wonderful Works of God*.
‘ Thus when God arose and shook the Earth, his *loud Call*
‘ to us in that amazing Providence was follow'd, so far as
‘ *Man* can judge, with the *still Voice* of his *SPIRIT*, in which
‘ he was present to *awaken* many and bring them to say
‘ *trembling*, *What must we do to be saved?* Yea, as we hope,
‘ to *turn not a few* from *Sin* to *God* in a *thorough Conversion*.
‘ But when the *Bitterness* of *Death* was past, much the greater
‘ Part of those whom *God's Terrors* affrighted, gave sad
‘ Occasion to remember those Words, *Psalms 78. 34,--- 36.*
‘ *When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned*
‘ *and enquired early after God. And they remembred that God*
‘ *was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Never-*
‘ *theless, they did flatter him with their Mouths, and they lied*
‘ *unto him with their Tongues.* And there has since been great
‘ Reason to complain of our speedy Return to our former
‘ *Sins*, notwithstanding some *Hopes* given of a more general
‘ *Reformation.*’

But a more remarkable *Revival of Religion* in this *Country* follows in a Time of great Security; when there was no terrible *Dispensation of Providence* to awaken the *Minds of Men*, in the Years 1734, 35, and 36. An Account of this is given in a printed Treatise entitled, *A faithful NARRATIVE of the surprizing Work of GOD in the Conversion of many hundred Souls in Northampton, and the neighbouring Towns and Villages of the County of Hampshire in the Province of the MASSACHUSETTS, &c. in a Letter to the Rev. Dr. Benja.*

Colman

Colman of Boston, written by the Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards Minister of Northampton, Nov. 6. 1736, with an Attestation from some of the Rev. Ministers of Hampshire, &c.

Out of which we shall only select these three or four Leaves.

[Revival of Religion at NORTHAMPTON.]

‘ Just after my Grandfather’s Death, it seemed to be a time of extraordinary Dulness in Religion: *Licentiousness* for some Years greatly prevailed among the Youth of the Town; they were many of them very much addicted to Night-walking, and frequenting the Tavern, and lead Practices, wherein some, by their Example exceedingly corrupted others. It was their Manner very frequently to get together, in Conventions of both Sexes, for Mirth and Jollity, which they called *Frolicks*; and they would often spend the greater part of the Night in them, without regard to any Order in the Families they belonged to: and indeed Family-Government did too much fail in the Town. It was become very customary with many of our young People, to be *Indecent* in their Carriage at *Meeting*, which doubtless, would not have prevailed to such a Degree, had it not been that my Grandfather through his great Age, (tho’ he retained his Powers surprizingly to the last) was not so able to *Observe* them. There had also long prevailed in the Town, a Spirit of Contention between two Parties, into which they had for many Years been divided, by which, was maintain’d a *Jealousy* one of the other, and they were prepared to *oppose* one another in all publick Affairs.

‘ But in two or three Years after Mr. Stoddard’s Death, there began to be a sensible Amendment of these Evils; the young People shew’d more of a Disposition to hearken to Counsel, and by degrees left off their *Frolicking*, and grew observably more *Decent* in their Attendance on the publick Worship, and there were more that manifested a *Religious Concern* than there used to be.

‘ At the latter end of the Year 1733. there appeared a very unusual flexibleness, and yielding to Advice, in our young People. It had been too long their manner to make the *Evening after the Sabbath* *, and after our publick *Lecture*, to be especially the Times of their *Mirth*, and Company

* It must be noted, that it has never been our Manner, to observe the *Evening* that follows the Sabbath; but that which precedes it, as Part of holy Time.

keeping. But a *Sermon* was now preached on the Sabbath before the *Lecture*, to shew the *Evil Tendency* of the Practice, and to persuade them to reform it ; and it was urged on *Heads of Families*, that it should be a thing *agreed upon* among them to govern their Families, and keep their Children at home, at these times ; and withal it was more *privately* moved, that they should meet together, the next Day, in their several Neighbourhoods, to know each other's Minds, which was accordingly done, and the *Motion* complied with throughout the Town. But *Parents* found little, or no occasion for the exercise of Government in the Case : the young *People* declared themselves *convinced* by what they had heard from the *Pulpit*, and were willing of themselves to comply with the *Counsel* that had been given : and it was *immediately*, and, I suppose, almost *universally* complied with ; and there was a thorough *Reformation* of these Disorders thenceforward, which has continued ever since.

Presently after this, there began to appear a *remarkable Religious Concern* at a little *Village*, belonging to the Congregation, call'd *Pascommuck*, where a few Families were settled, at about *three Miles* distance from the main Body of the Town. At this place, a number of *Persons* seemed to be *savinely wrought upon*. In the *April* following, *Anna* 1734, there happen'd a very *sudden and awful Death* of a young *Man*, in the *Bloom* of his *Youth* ; who being violently seized with a *Pleurisy*, and taken immediately very *delirious*, died in about *two Days* ; which (together with what was preached publickly on that Occasion) much *affected* many young *People*. This was followed with another Death of a young married *Woman*, who had been considerably *exercised* in *Mind*, about the *Salvation* of her *Soul*, before she was ill, and was in great *DistrEss*, in the beginning of her *Illness* ; but seemed to have *satisfying Evidences* of God's saving *Mercy* to her, before her Death ; so that she died very full of *Comfort*, in a most earnest and moving Manner *warning*, and *counselling* others. This seem'd much to contribute to the solemnizing of the Spirits of many young *Persons* : and there began evidently to appear more of a *Religious Concern* on *People's Minds*.

In the *Fall* of the *Year*, I proposed it to the young *People*, that they should agree among themselves to spend the *Evenings* after *Lectures* in *social Religion*, and to that end di-
vide

vide themselves into several Companies to meet in various parts of the Town ; which was accordingly done, and those Meetings have been since continued, and the Example imitated by elder People. This was follow'd with the Death of an elderly Person, which was attended with many unusual Circumstances, by which many were much moved and affected.

About this time, began the great Noise that was in this Part of the Country, about Arminianism, which seemed to appear with a very threatening Aspect upon the Interest of Religion here. The Friends of vital Piety trembled for fear of the issue ; but it seemed, contrary to their Fear, strongly to be over-ruled for the promoting of Religion. Many who looked on themselves as in a Christless Condition, seemed to be awaken'd by it, with fear that God was about to withdraw from the Land, and that we should be given up to Heterodoxy, and corrupt Principles ; and that then their Opportunity for obtaining Salvation would be past ; and many who were brought a little to doubt about the Truth of the Doctrines they had hitherto been taught, seem'd to have a kind of a trembling Fear with their Doubts, lest they should be led into By-paths, to their eternal undoing : And they seem'd with much Concern and Engagedness of Mind, to enquire what was indeed the Way in which they must come to be accepted with God. There were then some things said publickly on that Occasion, concerning *Justification by Faith alone*.

Altho' great Fault was found with meddling with the Controversy in the Pulpit, by such a Person, and at that Time, and tho' it was ridiculed by many elsewhere ; yet it proved a Word spoken in season here ; and was most evidently attended with a very remarkable Blessing of Heaven to the Souls of the People in this Town. They received thence a general Satisfaction with respect to the main Thing in Question, which they had been in trembling Doubts and Concern about ; and their Minds were engag'd the more earnestly to seek that they might come to be accepted of God, and saved in the Way of the Gospel, which had been made evident to them to be the true and only Way. And then it was, in the latter Part of December, that the Spirit of God began extraordinarily to set in, and wonderfully to work amongst us ; and there were, very suddenly, one after another,

‘ another, *five or six* Persons, who were to all Appearance ‘ favingly converted, and some of them wrought upon in a ‘ very remarkable Manner.

‘ Particularly, I was surprized with the Relation of a *young Woman*, who had been one of the greatest Company-Keepers in the whole Town : When she came to me, I had never heard that she was become in any wise serious, but by the Conversation I then had with her, it appeared to me, that what she gave an Account of, was a glorious Work of God’s infinite Power and sovereign Grace ; and that God had given her a *new Heart*, truly broken and sanctified. I could not then doubt of it, and have seen much in my Acquaintance with her since to confirm it.

‘ Tho’ the Work was *glorious*, yet I was filled with Concern about the *Effect* it might have upon others : I was ready to conclude (tho’ too rashly) that some would be *barden’d* by it, in Carelessness and Looseness of Life ; and and would take Occasion from it to open their Mouths, in *Reproaches* of Religion. But the *Event* was the *Reverse*, to a wonderful Degree ; God made it, I suppose, the *greatest Occasion of Awakening* to others, of any Thing that ever came to pass in the Town. I have had abundant Opportunity to know the Effect it had, by my private Conversation with many. The News of it seemed to be almost like a *Flash of Lightning*, upon the Hearts of young People, all over the Town, and upon many others. Those Persons amongst us, who used to be *farthest* from Seriousness, and that I most feared would make an ill Improvement of it, seemed greatly to be *awakened* with it ; many went to talk with her, concerning what she had met with ; and what appeared in her seemed to be to the Satisfaction of all that did so.

‘ Presently upon this, a great and earnest Concern about the great Things of Religion, and the eternal World, became *universal* in all Parts of the Town, and among Persons of all Ages ; the Noise among the *dry Bones* waxed louder and louder : All other Talk but about spiritual and eternal Things, was soon thrown by ; all the Conversation in all Companies, and upon all Occasions, was upon these Things only, unless so much as was necessary for People, carrying on their ordinary secular Busines. Other Dif- course than of the Things of Religion, would scarcely be tolerated

tolerated in any Company. The Minds of People were wonderfully taken off from the *World*, it was treated amongst us as a Thing of very little Consequence : They seem'd to follow their worldly Busines, more as a Part of their Duty, than from any Disposition they had to it ; the *Temptation* now seemed to lie on that Hand, to neglect worldly Affairs too much, and to spend too much Time in the immediate Exercise of Religion : Which Thing was exceedingly misrepresented by Reports that were spread in distant Parts of the Land, as tho' the People here had wholly thrown by all worldly Busines, and betook themselves entirely to reading and praying, and such like religious Exercises.

But altho' People did not ordinarily neglect their worldly Busines ; yet there then was the Reverse of what commonly is : *Religion* was with all Sorts the great Concern, and the *World* was a Thing only by the by. The only Thing in their View was to get the Kingdom of Heaven, and every one appeared pressing into it : The Engagedness of their Hearts in this great Concern cou'd not be hid, it appear'd in their very *Countenances*. It then was a dreadful Thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in Danger every Day of dropping into Hell ; and what Persons Minds were intent upon was to *escape for their Lives*, and to *fly from the Wrath to come*. All would eagerly lay hold of Opportunities for their Souls ; and were wont very often to meet together in private Houses for religious Purposes : And such Meetings when appointed were wont greatly to be thronged.

There was scarcely a single Person in the Town, either old or young, that was left unconcerned about the great Things of the eternal *World*. Those that were wont to be the vainest, and loosest, and those that had been most disposed to think, and speak lightly of vital and experimental Religion, were now generally subject to great Awakenings. And the Work of *Conversion* was carried on in a most astonishing Manner, and increased more and more ; Souls did as it were come by Flocks to Jesus Christ. From Day to Day, for many Months together, might be seen evident Instances of Sinners brought out of *Darkness* into marvelous Light, and delivered out of an horrible Pit, and from the miry Clay, and set upon a Rock, with a new Song of Praise to God in their Mouths.

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‘ This Work of God, as it was carried on; and the Number of true Saints multiplied, soon made a glorious Alteration in the Town ; so that in the Spring and Summer following, *Anno 1735.* the Town seemed to be full of the Presence of God : It never was so full of *Love*, nor so full of *Joy* ; and yet so full of Distress, as it was then. There were remarkable Tokens of God’s Presence in almost every House. It was a Time of Joy in *Families* on the Account of Salvation’s being brought unto them ; *Parents* rejoicing over their Children as new born, and *Husbands* over their *Wives*, and *Wives* over their *Husbands*. *The Goings of God* were then seen in his *Sanctuary*, God’s Day was a *Delight*, and his *Tabernacles* were amiable. Our publick *Assemblies* were then beautiful ; the Congregation was alive in God’s Service, every one earnestly intent on the public Worship, every *Hearer* eager to drink in the Words of the *Minister* as they came from his Mouth ; the Assembly in general were from Time to Time, in *Tears* while the Word was preached ; *some* weeping with Sorrow and Distress, *others* with Joy and Love, *others* with Pity and Concern for the Souls of their Neighbours.

‘ Our public *Praises* were then greatly enliven’d ; God was then served in our *Psalmody*, in some Measure, in the *Beauty of Holiness*. It has been observable, that there has been scarce any Part of divine Worship, wherein good Men amongst us have had *Grace so drawn forth*, and their Hearts so lifted up in the *Ways of God*, as in singing his *Praises* : Our Congregation excell’d all that ever I knew in the external Part of the Duty before, generally carrying regularly, and well, *three Parts of Musick*, and the *Women* a Part by themselves : But now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual Elevation of Heart and Voice, which made the Duty pleasant indeed.

(To be finisched, and go on with other Accounts in our next.)

*Just Reprinted, and Sold by Kneeland and Green,
Sinners in the Hands of an angry GOD. A Sermon
Preached at Enfield, July 8. 1741. At a Time of great Awak-
nings ; and attended with remarkable Impressions on many of the
Hearers. By JONATHAN EDWARDS, A M. Pastor of the Church
in Northampton.*

Dr. Watt’s in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Prince, April 22. 1742, says, ‘ I think Mr. Edwards’s Sermon on the Danger of the Unconverted, is one of the most terrible Representations I ever read.’